Alberta

Campus Alberta Quality Council

2015-2018 Action Plan

Alberta Innovation and Advanced Education

Campus Alberta Quality Council

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Message from the Co-Chairs

On behalf of the Campus Alberta Quality Council (CAQC), we are pleased to provide you with our 2015-18 Action Plan. This Action Plan, Council's fourth, has been developed in accordance with best-practices guidelines identified by the *Public Agencies Governance Framework*.

Council's mandate includes two primary responsibilities: first, to review all new degree program proposals referred from the Ministry and to make recommendations to the Minister on the quality of those program proposals; and secondly, to monitor the quality of degree programs in Alberta post-secondary institutions.

The 2015-18 Action Plan identifies three goals based on Council's mandate:

1) CAQC will carry out quality reviews that are well-developed, efficient, and evidence-based;
2) Council will ensure that degree programs approved on recommendation of CAQC continue to meet Council's quality standards and conditions; and
3) Council will effectively communicate and collaborate with institutions, government and other stakeholders to maintain delivery of quality degree programs to serve the best interests of adult learners.

The priority initiatives identified within each of the goals draw heavily on Council's operating principles such as the recognition that the primary responsibility for academic and institutional quality assurance rests with post-secondary institutions themselves (Principle 15). Recognizing the importance of institutional self-governance, CAQC is also committed to working closely with each institution offering degree programs in Alberta in a collaborative relationship that encourages continuous improvement in institutional quality assurance policy and processes (Principle 11). In all situations, the best interests of learners are at the core of Council's activities as it assesses and monitors the quality of degree programs (Principle 2).

Council will continue to support collaboration within Campus Alberta by ensuring that new collaborative delivery of degree arrangements, developed on the basis of the programs approved on Council's recommendation, meet CAQC's quality standards and conditions. Council will also continue to work closely with institutions to refine and clarify Council's expectations with respect to the role of faculty scholarship, research and teaching excellence in contributing to high quality degree programs. In order to insure that Alberta standards are recognized nationally and internationally, Council will continue to engage in discussion with other Canadian and international agencies with similar mandates.

We look forward to working with our new Minister, the Ministry, and the stakeholders in the post-secondary system to meet the best interests of learners and ensure high quality degree programs will continue to be available. Council also looks forward to providing an update on our 2015-18 Action Plan in our 2015-16 Annual Report.

Peter Mahaffy
Interim Co-Chair

Art Quinney
Interim Co-Chair

Mandate

Established under section 108 of the *Post-secondary Learning Act (Act)*, the Campus Alberta Quality Council is an arms-length quality assurance agency that has been established to advance the quality of the post-secondary system in Alberta and is accountable to the Minister of Innovation and Advanced Education (Minister). The Council is an advisory body whose primary responsibility is to provide advice and recommendations to the Minister on applications from post-secondary institutions seeking to offer new degree programs in Alberta under the terms of the *Act* and the Programs of Study Regulation (91/2009). The Council also has a responsibility to review and monitor degree programs to ensure that they meet its expectations of quality.

Operating Principles

Principle 1 – The Council standards are appropriate to the program level/scope and are comparable to national and international standards. Within this context, Council is open to flexibility and innovation in degree programming.

Principle 2 – The best interests of learners are at the core of Council's activities as it assesses and monitors the quality of degree programs.

Principle 3 – The Council respects the foundational role of academic freedom in the provision of high quality post-secondary programs.

Principle 4 – Peer evaluation is an essential component of the Council's evaluation of post-secondary degree programs.

Principle 5 – Stakeholder participation is an integral part of the degree appraisal process.

Principle 6 – The Council acts to develop and retain autonomy from influences that may undermine or otherwise affect trust in its functions and decisions.

Principle 7 – The Council exhibits equity in all aspects of its operation.

Principle 8 – The Council exhibits and promotes openness and transparency in all its practices and policies.

Principle 9 – Processes established by the Council may be iterative in nature when, in Council's opinion, a proposed degree program has the potential for development and improvement.

Principle 10 – Within the context of its iterative processes, the Council acts expeditiously and in keeping with principles of natural justice.

Principle 11 – The Council is committed to the quality assurance review of its own activities and to the interprovincial sharing of best practices in post-secondary degree program quality assessment.

Principle 12 – The Council exhibits and promotes appreciation of institutional diversity and respect for institutional autonomy and integrity among the institutions proposing degree programs.

Principle 13 – The Council ensures that approved degree programs and Council decisions with respect to them are monitored and the extent of monitoring is appropriate to the experience of the institution.

Principle 14 – Members and peer reviewers shall act in accordance with ethical standards and abide by Council's code of conduct which includes provisions on conflict of interest.

Principle 15 – The Council recognizes that the primary responsibility for academic and institutional quality assurance rests with post-secondary institutions themselves.

Goals and Priority Initiatives

Respecting its mandate, the Campus Alberta Quality Council has two main responsibilities:

- Provide advice and recommendations to the Minister with respect to new degree program proposals.
- Monitor approved degree programs after their implementation.

Council has outlined three goals, along with priority initiatives and strategies for achieving these goals.

Goal 1 CAQC will carry out quality reviews that are well-developed, efficient, and evidence-based.

Priority Initiatives:

1.1 Work with the Ministry to develop a mechanism to ensure new collaborative delivery arrangements involving Council-recommended degree programs meet Council's quality standards and conditions.

1.2 Conduct a systematic review of Council's quality assessment processes and guidelines and experience with respect to program proposals from non-resident institutions.

1.3 Explore additional ways to work with institutions to emphasize quality assurance of teaching and learning as they develop new programs.

1.4 Work with institutions to incorporate more fully the use of student learning outcomes and their assessment in new program development.

1.5 Work with Ministry officials on reviews of quality assurance in the system, including the role of Council,

Goal 2 Council will ensure that degree programs approved on recommendation of CAQC continue to meet Council's quality standards and conditions.

Priority Initiatives:

2.1 Consider extension of the audit process for the monitoring of degree granting institutions beyond the CARI sector, and initiate processes for the second round of audits with the CARIs.

2.2 Continue to work with sectors to further refine expectations for scholarly activity to support high quality programs using, as appropriate, adaptations of frameworks such as Boyer's models of scholarship.

2.3 Assist in the development of quality assurance processes within Campus Alberta through collaborative interactions with institutions, such as developing and/or hosting future workshops, webinars and similar learning opportunities.

2.4 Work with institutions to develop program-level indicators of quality teaching and learning.

2.5 Work with institutions to more fully use student learning outcomes in quality assurance of degree programs.

Goal 3 Council will effectively communicate and collaborate with institutions, government and other stakeholders to maintain delivery of quality degree programs to serve the best interests of adult learners.

Priority Initiatives:

3.1 **Continue Council's proactive interaction and dialogue with stakeholders regarding Council's role and processes.**

3.2 **Work with the Ministry and the Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer to host a forum on student learning outcomes and their assessment.**

3.3 **Upon appointment of a new CAQC Chair or new Minister, review and renew the Mandate and Roles document.**

3.4 **Through Council's Co-chairs, commit to continued regular communication with the Minister and senior Ministry officials.**

3.5 **Work with the Ministry on initiatives and policies that are relevant to Council's mandate, especially the Adult Learning Review and the development of the Alberta Credentials Framework.**

3.6 **Through Council's Co-chairs and Secretariat, enhance consultation and share effective practices with post-secondary quality assurance agencies in Canada.**